



(May 2, 2016)

In order to further improve the lines of communication and to respond to the concerns between the National VA Council and you our members, I have established a National VA Council Briefing. This NVAC Briefing will bring you the latest news and developments within DVA and provide you with the current status of issues this Council is currently addressing. I believe that this NVAC Briefing will greatly enhance the way in which we communicate and the way in which we share new information, keeping you better informed.

Alma L. Lee
National VA Council, President

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**In This Briefing: New VA reform bill faces an uphill battle on multiple fronts**

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The VA omnibus bill was considered controversial well before it was introduced on April 28.

Now that it's out, the early wrangling over its reform measures looks to be everything that was anticipated.

The legislation, known as the Veterans First Act, has sought to provide the VA secretary with more power to discipline and fire employees accused of wrongdoing after a series of high-profile cases seems to have hamstrung the agency.

[FEDERAL TIMES](#)

[VA reform bill would make it easier to fire employees](#)

Senior Executive Association interim president Jason Briefel minced no words, saying in a statement, that the bill's proposal to cut the Merit Systems Protection Board from the appeals process was a violation of employee rights and subtly suggested that it might be ripe for a court challenge.

“Time and again, SEA and partners have sounded the alarm regarding the detrimental effects these ‘accountability’ proposals would have on the VA workforce and the veterans they serve,” he said.

[MILITARYTIMES](#)

[Senator: Large veterans reform bill promises 'a new VA'](#)

“The inclusion of potentially unconstitutional disciplinary provisions within a bill that, at its core, is aimed at improving veteran services and benefits is just another reminder that there are some in Congress who, in their constant quest for media attention and re-election, overreach beyond their congressional jurisdiction. Workplace culture cannot be changed overnight or via legislation.”

The bill could also see an amendment fight in the House after Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., and Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., had previously expressed concern that the legislation may not go far enough when it came to accountability.

[FEDERAL TIMES](#)

[Rubio, Miller ask committee to back VA accountability bills](#)

Other proposals—including limits on the amount of paid administrative leave an employee can have while under investigation and the removal of bonuses for employees found guilty of wrongdoing—could see resistance from congressional Democrats and the White House.

Ultimately, the VA acknowledged that the bill is just getting started and will likely rely on what compromises can be struck in before heading to a floor vote.

“The goals that we have set out to accomplish under MyVA are aggressive and we look forward to working with our partners in the Senate and the House for the legislative support we will need to bring them into reality,” the agency’s statement said following the bill’s introduction.